

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 538

By Ramsey

A RESOLUTION to honor Blount County's African-American soldiers who served in the Civil War and the valiant men of the United States Colored Heavy Artillery.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should join with local historical and veterans organizations in recognizing the heroic service rendered by African-Americans to the United States armed forces during the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, as part of the commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, black soldiers from Blount County are being honored for their valiant service to their country in the Union Army, most of them having served in the U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery during that war; and

WHEREAS, the Blount County Genealogical and Historical Society, African-Americans of Appalachia and Blount County, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Blount Historic Trust, and the East Tennessee Civil War Alliance are all sponsoring and participating in this worthy event; and

WHEREAS, the 1st Regiment, United States Colored Heavy Artillery, was organized at Knoxville, Tennessee on February 20, 1864; its designation was changed to 10th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery on May 21, 1864, and mustered out on March 31, 1866; and

WHEREAS, the brave African-American soldiers from Blount County included:
Benjamin Badget, Frank Badget, Richard Badget, Thomas Badget, Harrison Badget/Bogett, Andrew Badgett, James Ball, Alexander Ballard, Samuel L. Bowes/Bowers, Andrew Bowman, Charles Boyd, Emanuel Bussell, John Bussell, William C. Carter, John Catlett/Cadlett, Hugh Cook, Andrew Cox, Samuel L. Fowler, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Henry Gamble, Allen Garner, Tyler Garner, Hiram George, Jefferson George, Joseph George, Andrew Gorley, Samuel W.

Gregory, Elijah Griffith, Lafayette Hackney, James Hall, David "Doc" Hannum/Hanam, Zachariah Henderson, Abraham Henry, Alexander Henry, Claiburn Henry, Franklin N. Henry, Harrison Henry, Houston/Huston Henry, John Henry, John T. Henry, Newton Henry, William Henry, Anthony Howard, James Howard, Josiah S./Joshua Howard, Hugh Hudson, Mitchell L. Hunter, James Hurst/Hurse, Abraham Johnson, Thomas Lillard, Reuben Matlock/Mattock, James McNutt, James Norwood, Benjamin Owens, Granville Owens, Clarence Pate, George A. Pate, William T. Pate, Wilson S. Pleasant, Matthew Porter , Abraham Porter aka Johnson, Buck "W.M." Prater, Henry Pride, Henry Rogers, William Sharp, Joseph H. Smith, Jordan Stephens, Lewis Tate, James Taylor, Anderson Wallace, Dennis Wesley Warren, John Warren, Samuel D. Warren, Joseph Williams, Alexander Wilson, John Wilson, Oscar Wilson, Robert Wright, Silas Wright, and William Young; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans were initially barred from serving in the U.S. military during the Civil War; however, after the Union Army turned back Lee's first invasion of the North at Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation was subsequently announced, black recruitment was pursued in earnest; and

WHEREAS, volunteers from South Carolina, Tennessee, and Massachusetts filled the first all-black regiments, but recruitment was slow until black leaders such as Frederick Douglass encouraged African-American men to become soldiers to ensure eventual full citizenship; and

WHEREAS, African-American volunteers began to respond and, in May of 1863 the federal government established the Bureau of Colored Troops to manage the burgeoning numbers of black soldiers; and

WHEREAS, by the end of the Civil War, roughly 179,000 black men, or ten percent of the Union Army, served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy; and

WHEREAS, nearly 40,000 black soldiers died over the course of the war, 30,000 of infection or disease; black soldiers served in the artillery and the infantry and performed all noncombat support functions that sustain an army; and

WHEREAS, nearly eighty black commissioned officers served in the Civil War, and black women, who could not formally join the Army, nonetheless served as nurses, spies, and scouts, the most famous of whom was Harriet Tubman, who scouted for the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers; and

WHEREAS, because of prejudice against them, black units were not used in combat as extensively as they might have been; nevertheless, African-American soldiers served with distinction in a number of battles, including those fought in Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, Port Hudson, Louisiana, Petersburg, Virginia, Nashville, Tennessee, and Fort Wagner, South Carolina; by war's end, sixteen black soldiers had been awarded the Medal of Honor for their valor; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the perils of war faced by all Civil War soldiers, black soldiers faced additional problems stemming from racial prejudice as discriminatory practices permeated the U.S. military; it was not until June 1864 that Congress granted equal pay, rations, and medical care to U.S. Colored Troops and made the action retroactive; and

WHEREAS, African-American troops also faced greater peril than white troops when captured by the Confederate Army, as black prisoners of war were typically treated more harshly than their white counterparts; in perhaps the most heinous known example of such abuse, Confederate soldiers shot to death black Union soldiers captured at the Fort Pillow Tennessee engagement of 1864; and

WHEREAS, despite the racial prejudice they faced and the many hardships they endured, Blount County's African-American Union soldiers and the brave men of the United States Colored Artillery served their country gallantly during the Civil War, and their courage in the face of great adversity should be remembered on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that as we observe the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, we honor the memory of Blount County's African-American soldiers and the valiant men of the United States Colored Heavy Artillery and commemorate their distinguished service to their country as soldiers and citizens during the Civil War.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.